



INSTRUCT-O-GRAM

THE HANDS-ON TRAINING GUIDE FOR THE FIRE INSTRUCTOR

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FIRE OFFICER II

The Fire Officer has traditionally been promoted without much, if any, training or education on how to perform his or her new job. Experience usually has served as the training ground for making and implementing decisions at the emergency scene and in the station. Often existing officers cannot see the need for an officer-training program. They learned through experience, therefore experience must be the best teacher. However, usually people who do not see the need for a training program can be brought on board when given the opportunity to relate their knowledge and experiences to a younger generation of officers. This series of Instruct-O-Grams will give departments a plan to follow to give new and existing Fire Officers a chance to learn what the organization and the greater Fire Service expects of them before having to find out through either performance or, more likely, non-performance of an expected task or action. The IOG's will follow NFPA 1021, Professional Standard for Fire Officer.

This IOG will cover actions expected from a fire officer operating at the Officer II level. People taking instruction at this level bring a lot of experience, knowledge, and motivation to the class. These traits should be called on by the instructor to make the class more interesting enjoyable and beneficial to all of the students.

The objectives for this IOG are from NFPA 1021 Professional Standard for Fire Officer. The instructor should review NFPA 1021 and appropriate sections of the IFSTA book, Fire Department Company Officer. The instructor should bring examples of:

- ◆ Individuals with performance problems
- ◆ Occupancies to be inspected
- ◆ Pictures or videos of fire or other emergency scenes
- ◆ Examples of safety case histories

It is expected that the student will have a good working knowledge of his or her department policies and procedures. This pre-existing knowledge should be utilized in an interactive lecture format, drawing on the knowledge and experience of each student to keep up discussion on the topics.

Each student should bring the following things to class:

- ◆ A copy of the department performance evaluation(s)
- ◆ A policy that needs to be reviewed or revised
- ◆ An Incident Report from one or more major incident(s)
- ◆ A copy of the department's inspection form

Time Required: 8 Hours

Resources:

Bruegman, Randy R., et al., On Guard, Making a Difference, The Fire Officer's Role,
Brunicini, Alan, Fire Command, Fire Protection Publications, Stillwater, OK,
Compton, Dennis, When in Doubt, Lead!, Fire Protection Publications, Stillwater, OK, 1999
Fire Department Company Officer, 4th Edition, IFSTA
Leadership: Strategies for Company Success, National Fire Academy

Leadership: Strategies for Supervisory Success, National Fire Academy
Leadership: Strategies for Personal Success, National Fire Academy
Shaping the Future, National Fire Academy

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The Instruct-O-Gram is the monthly training outline of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI). The monthly Instruct-O-Gram is provided as one of the benefits of membership in ISFSI.

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Determine fire origin and/or cause.

Determining cause and origin of a fire is usually the responsibility of the Fire Marshal. For the majority of fires this responsibility is delegated to the company officer. There are a number of clues the officer should look for to determine the origin and cause of a fire.

A. Point of Origin

1. Interview reporting party
2. Interview first in fire company
3. "V" pattern points to point of origin
4. Area of greatest damage tends to be at origin

B. Burn patterns

1. Normal "V" suggests spot origin
2. Flammable liquids leave a "splotchy" burn pattern on floors or walls

C. Securing the scene

As soon as possible the scene of the fire needs to be secured against entry by all personnel not involved in determining the cause. To secure the scene a perimeter needs to be established and marked with a rope or tape. If the case goes to court a conviction can be lost if the evidence has potentially been contaminated due to an unsecured scene.

V. Emergency Service Delivery

Produce operational plans requiring multi-unit operations.

Operational plans are essential to preserve scene control and fire fighter safety, as well as a successful outcome for the incident. The operational plan depends on many factors including size of the building, environmental conditions, need for rescue and/or evacuation, resources (including personnel) available and the size of

the incident. The fire ground commander needs to quickly and systematically evaluate all of these factors to determine the proper strategy. Tactical worksheets as used in many departments can assist in making these decisions.

ACTIVITY

Divide the class into the small groups. Give each group a scenario, including a picture or video, and a tactical worksheet. Have each group work through the incident including termination procedures. Each group should present the incident and their solutions to it to the rest of the class.

VI. Safety

Analyze an assigned member's accident, injury or exposure history.

Lead a discussion of safety and the fire officer's role in maintaining safety through adherence to established policies and procedures. Have each student discuss how his or her department investigates accidents. The discussion should include what ranks are involved, what types of accidents are investigated, what discipline is imposed and how accident investigations are perceived by the department members.

ACTIVITY

Break the class into groups. Give each group a case history of an "accident prone" fire fighter. Have the groups determine what was the cause of each accident. Any unsafe activities, whether or not they contributed to the accident, should be identified. Given the history, the groups should then recommend action to be taken. The groups should present their findings to the class. The class should then discuss the recommended action. Was the action justified? Would they have recommended the same action? Why or why not.

A. Changing Policies

Prepare recommendations for changes to an existing policy.

Most departments have Policies and Procedures. At any given time some of those policies and procedures are in need of alterations. The students should each have a policy in need of review or revision. The students should re-write the policy and provide justification in writing for the change. Pros and cons to the proposed change should be included.

B. Preparing Budgets

Prepare a budget request.

Officers operating at the Officer II level will prepare budgets and budget requests. The students should prepare a budget request for one capitol and one minor item. The request should include justification for the purchase, a statement on how the purchase will be used and by whom, and a full accounting of all costs involved.

C. News Releases

Prepare a news release.

Each student should have an incident report. The students should prepare a press release from the information on the incident report. The release should include the who, what, where, when, and how of the incident.

D. Researching and Writing Reports

Prepare a report to a supervisor.

Each student brought an accident report to class. The students should use that incident to write a report to a supervisor outlining what happened and recommending action to prevent re-occurrence.

ACTIVITY

Have each student present one of the self-directed projects to the rest of the class. Each student should be prepared to answer questions on the project just as if it were being presented to a superior officer.

IV. Inspection and Investigation

Describe procedures for conducting fire inspections at a given occupancy.

Most jurisdictions have adopted one of the national fire codes. These codes provide for fire department inspection of all buildings in the jurisdiction except private residences. Usually the Fire Marshal's Office delegates the responsibility to inspect most occupancies to fire companies. Fire fighters, and more specifically company officers, have a responsibility and a duty to correct known violations of the fire codes.

Usually the violation is such that it requires giving the owner some specified amount of time to correct the violation. For more serious violations the company officer may require that the property owner correct the problem immediately. Officers at this level should have had many experiences with fire inspections. Lead a discussion with the class on inspection procedures and the difficulty of gaining compliance with the fire codes.

ACTIVITY

Break the class into groups. Each group should choose one or more inspection forms and be assigned to inspect the building in which class is being held. If the building is of sufficient size each group should be given a different area of the building to inspect. Each group should present the findings of their inspections to the rest of the class. The presentation should include pros and cons about the inspection form used and suggestions for improving that form or the form used in their home departments.

The organization and people in it make themselves available to help people achieve their goals. But the individual is in charge of meeting those goals.

ICEBREAKER

As an introduction, have each student give two examples of coaching in their career, one in which they were coached by a superior and one in which they coached a subordinate. They should explain why the coaching was needed or wanted, how the coaching was performed and the outcome.

B. Performance Evaluations

Utilize human resource policies to evaluate the job performance of assigned members.

Before a fire fighter or junior officer's performance can be evaluated it must be clear to all involved what criteria will be used to evaluate that performance. This is commonly done through job descriptions and SOP's. If there are no job descriptions or articulated expectations then the evaluation will not be meaningful.

Evaluations should be based on everyday activities. One glaring strong or weak point should not be the basis for an evaluation. The overall job performance is what should be judged. To do this properly the parties need to communicate constantly. To avoid a "surprise" at evaluation time feedback needs to be provided that can improve performance when needed and reinforce good performance.

Evaluations should only be done after all necessary information has been collected. This collection should be an ongoing process. No one can remember everything that happened over a year's time. The evaluator needs to keep good records on everyone whom he or she must evaluate.

ACTIVITY

Break the class into groups. Have each group choose a performance evaluation instrument from the ones brought to class and evaluate a fire fighter based on information from the instructor, or an individual known to one member of the group. Have the groups present their evaluation to the rest of the class. Part of the presentation should be strong and weak points of the evaluation process and the instrument used.

II. Community and Government Relations

Deliver a public education program to a target audience.

Public Education and Relations are more important now than ever. The officer operating at the Fire Officer II level should be comfortable talking to various groups about fire safety.

Brainstorm with the students about what types of groups are especially likely to request or need a public education program. When several groups, target audiences, have been identified discuss what topics are especially important to cover with these groups.

ACTIVITY

Each student should prepare and deliver a 90 second public education message. The instructor should give each student a target audience from the list that was developed by the group. There should be several different target audiences for the group. The time limit may be changed to better adapt to the size of the class, but the students should try to keep within 15 seconds of the time allotted.

III. Administration

A Fire Officer II operates as an administrator a large part of the time. The following self-directed projects will give the students a chance to work through an administrative function in the classroom setting. Each student should complete each project.

Objectives:

- ◆ Utilize human resource policies to maximize performance and/or correct unacceptable performance.
- ◆ Utilize human resource policies to evaluate the job performance of assigned members.
- ◆ Deliver a public education program to a target audience.
- ◆ Prepare recommendations for changes to an existing policy.
- ◆ Prepare a budget request.
- ◆ Prepare a news release.
- ◆ Prepare a report to a supervisor.
- ◆ Describe procedures for conducting fire inspections at a given occupancy.
- ◆ Determine fire origin and/or cause.
- ◆ Produce operational plans requiring multi-unit operations.
- ◆ Analyze an assigned member's accident, injury or exposure history.

I. Human Resource Management**A. Enhancing and Correcting Performance**

Utilize human resource policies to maximize performance and/or correct unacceptable performance.

Enhancing or correcting performance is one of the most important duties of a fire officer. Knowing what to expect from each individual and how to best bring it out is a valuable trait. This ability is similar to the ability of good athletic team coaches to bring out the best in their players. Coaching is an essential part of the fire officer's role in the organization.

Some people want to move up in the organization. Some people are happy where they are. They may want more responsibility or projects within their current rank or they may like being told what to do and trying to do it well. And some aren't sure what they

want to do. The fire officer's role is to learn what each person wants and help them to achieve it. There are several approaches to enhancing or correcting performance:

1. Self Help

The self-help method is really no method at all. The individual learns what is needed to do well and tries to do it. Each person is then limited by what he or she knows. Teamwork suffers because it is not built in to the system.

2. Network

The network method relies on fire fighters helping each other achieve their goals. They will share information. This method builds teamwork very well but if the organization has goals that are not clearly articulated and communicated they will not be met. Also individuals' goals may sometimes suffer for the good of the group.

3. Mentor

In the mentor method a fire officer picks a firefighter and teaches him or her how to achieve success. This method can have very good results because rising stars can be fostered and groomed for promotion. Organizational goals can be instilled at a very early point in an officer's career. On the other hand, good individuals are often passed over in this approach. Those individuals chosen to be mentored can be "Yes" people and apple polishers. They are sometimes taught not to think outside of narrow prescribed limits.

4. Engineering

The engineering method combines many of the good points from the other three systems. The organization lets people know what is needed for success.